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Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

Report of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues

Submitted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

Summary

The 2008 meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, held in Paris from 15 to 17 September 2008, was convened and hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The main theme of the meeting was "indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity".

* E/C.19/2009/1

** Submission of the present report was delayed in order to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

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I. Introduction

A. Meeting objectives

1. The 2008 meeting of the United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues was convened and hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 15 to 17 September 2008, just one year after the historic adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The meeting had two main objectives: first, to deepen the reflection on indigenous peoples' concepts of development as captured by the term "development with culture and identity" with a view to preparing a joint inter-agency contribution to the ninth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to be held in 2010, which will focus on this specific theme;[1] and second, to explore ways and means to reinforce joint United Nations action for the promotion of the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples, notably at the regional and country levels. The Inter-Agency Support Group also discussed modalities to strengthen its support for the work of the Permanent Forum, including its contribution to the 2009 session.

B. Participants

2. A total of 23 agencies from the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies participated in the meeting, as well as three members of the Permanent Forum, namely Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Chairperson), Margaret Lokawua and Carlos Mamani Condori (Vice-Chairperson). Senior management staff of UNESCO participated throughout the meeting. A detailed list of participants is available in conference room paper 3 presented to the Permanent Forum.

C. Official opening

3. The Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, inaugurated the Inter-Agency Support Group annual meeting in a public opening session and welcomed the Permanent Forum on the occasion of its first official visit to UNESCO. The Director-General emphasized that it was a great honour for UNESCO to chair the dynamic Group and he expressed his hope that the official visit of the Forum and the annual meeting of the Group would lead to new opportunities for dialogue and collaboration and deeper appreciation of indigenous world views and cultures.

4. The welcoming address was followed by a keynote address delivered by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the Forum. She emphasized that since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the mandate of the Forum had expanded to include the key task of implementing that important international instrument. She provided a larger picture of the global

[1] The full title of the ninth session is "Indigenous peoples' development with culture and identity: articles 3 and 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples". Article 3 states that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Article 23 states that indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development.

environment and economic crisis today and explained that the dominant development paradigm was the main cause for the challenging situation. She highlighted a number of positive developments regarding indigenous peoples' rights in several countries since the adoption of the Declaration.

5. Two further statements were made. John Scott, from the secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity and outgoing Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Support Group, said that not only had the Group grown to become a committed and active body supporting indigenous peoples' rights and aspirations, but it could also be compared to a growing and mutually supportive "family". Julian Burger, from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) made a short intervention on the Declaration and mentioned how the Group was referred to in the United Nations system as a model of good practice, notably with regard to its rotating chair.

D. Round table
Development with culture and identity in the light of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

6. The opening session was followed by a thematic round table to introduce the debate on the theme "indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity", which would be the focus of the ninth session of the Permanent Forum, to be held in New York in 2010. Speakers included the above-mentioned members of the Forum; H.E. Anaisabel Prera Flores, Ambassador of Guatemala to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO; and Darriann Riber of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Two Inter-Agency Support Group members responded as discussants: Birgitte Feiring, Chief Technical Adviser, Programme to Promote Convention No. 169, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Katérina Stenou, Director, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO focal point for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

7. A report on the thematic round table is provided in conference room paper 3 presented to the Permanent Forum.

E. Themes and organization of work

8. The Inter-Agency Support Group discussed the following agenda items: (a) Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity; (b) Joint United Nations action in support of indigenous peoples' issues at the regional and country level; and (c) Contribution of the Inter-Agency Support Group to the work of the Permanent Forum. Each session was co-chaired by a senior member of the UNESCO staff and a member of the Group. In addition, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) organized a side meeting on the policy guide initiative on indigenous peoples in urban areas (see conference room paper 3 presented to the Permanent Forum).

II. Main points and recommendations

Theme 1
Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity

9. The term "development with culture and identity" was suggested by the Permanent Forum and refers to a concept of development as proposed by indigenous peoples. It takes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as its main reference, in particular article 3 on the right to self-determination and article 23 on the right of indigenous peoples to development in accordance with their own aspirations, needs and interests. The Inter-Agency Support Group discussed the theme and initiated preparation of a joint contribution for the ninth session of the Permanent Forum, which would address the theme.

Sharing reflections and experiences

10. A number of points can be highlighted from the reflections on the thematic round table. The Permanent Forum members emphasized that the notion of development with culture and identity called for a revision of the dominant development paradigm. With reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they explained that for indigenous peoples the notion of self-determined development was central to pursuing the future aspirations of their communities. In fact, development with culture and identity implied a rights-based approach and was highly relevant to current debates on human rights, specifically cultural rights and cultural diversity. Linking those debates could, as some participants argued, further frame the development with culture and identity approach. Both individual and collective rights needed to be considered.

11. Participants commented on the key role and contributions of UNESCO in advancing the debate on culture and development, notably by bringing into discussion linkages with cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue which were underlined in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and related conventions. Some participants questioned the usefulness of the term "development", arguing that so far development paradigms did not seem to have contributed convincingly to improving the life and dignity of many people and they warned about the dangers of a single model of development. However, the Inter-Agency Support Group agreed that since those terms were used in policy and development strategies it was important to engage in that discourse and decision-making process, while raising critical questions and listening to alternative visions.

12. Some participants felt that within the United Nations system different interpretations of development co-existed. It could be insightful for United Nations agencies to analyse the notions of development as used in their respective organizations and relate them to the notion of development with culture and identity. From a more pragmatic perspective, participants agreed that in order to support indigenous visions of development, United Nations agencies should, in particular, explore the implications of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for their own policies and programmes, and take action accordingly. They emphasized the key role of participatory and consultative processes as an indispensable means of translating indigenous peoples' rights into concrete policy proposals.

13. The importance of understanding local contexts in the design and implementation of development interventions was emphasized, notably by applying cultural diversity perspectives and facilitating intercultural dialogue between planners and all those concerned by the intervention.

14. The Group strongly agreed that there was a need to further involve Governments alongside indigenous peoples in the design and implementation of the policies and programming of United Nations agencies in support of development with culture and identity. Forum members suggested that linkages between economic development and development with culture and identity should be further explored, notably in the context of the 2009 session of the Permanent Forum, which would discuss advances made regarding the social and economic development of indigenous peoples.

15. A number of Inter-Agency Support Group members shared examples of how their organizations attempt to support development with culture and identity through concrete projects with indigenous communities. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) presented its Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) its intercultural perspectives and approaches in the area of reproductive health, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) its Operational Policy on Indigenous Peoples and Strategy for Indigenous Development, and UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the work carried out under the Thematic Window on Culture and Development as part of the Spanish Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) referred to its cultural documentation and indigenous peoples' management training programme for communities. A number of points emerged from these presentations and the subsequent discussions, including the following:

(a) The need to work at all levels, globally, regionally and locally, involving and confronting perspectives of all stakeholders, namely, indigenous communities, governments, bilateral agencies, the United Nations, and others;

(b) The importance of having indigenous peoples represented on programme boards and mechanisms;

(c) The need for a deeper understanding of local realities by all stakeholders involved in a project as a prerequisite for designing culturally adequate strategies and the role of intercultural dialogue in this regard;

(d) The need for methodologies to create a sense of joint ownership for development interventions between Governments and indigenous communities, with regard, for example, to equity funds and participation of indigenous peoples on boards.

Towards a joint Inter-Agency Support Group paper on development with culture and identity for the 2010 session of the Permanent Forum

16. The Group agreed to work on a joint reflection paper on the concept and practices of development with culture and identity as they related to United Nations work with indigenous peoples. The paper could then be presented to the Permanent Forum at its ninth session, in 2010, which would focus on that theme.

17. The following seven elements were proposed in order to structure the initial draft of the paper: (a) an analysis of United Nations discourse on notions of culture and development in the light of indigenous peoples' perspectives; (b) implications of the new post-Declaration normative environment and how various United Nations legal instruments can support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; (c) implications of development with culture and identity at the level of concrete United Nations interventions; (d) contextual constraints on the United Nations when providing development assistance, notably external factors; (e) processes and practices of consultation and participation of indigenous peoples; (f) financial implications; and (g) recommendations and guiding principles to further develop the concept and practice of development with culture and identity.

18. UNESCO will coordinate the elaboration of the paper, while Inter-Agency Support Group members will contribute to the process by drafting outlines for specific sections and providing input to others. UNESCO will contact Group members with more details about the joint elaboration process.

Theme 2
Joint United Nations action in support of indigenous peoples' issues at the regional and country levels

19. A recent outcome of Inter-Agency Support Group collaboration has been the joint elaboration of guidelines to orient United Nations country teams in their work on promoting the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples. The United Nations Development Group guidelines on indigenous peoples' issues were adopted by the United Nations Development Group in 2008. Since then a plan of action for the roll-out and implementation of the guidelines has been developed and a corresponding management committee put in place. It is composed of ILO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, and UNICEF, which will report once a year to the United Nations Development Group.

20. OHCHR presented a project idea entitled "Working together on indigenous peoples' rights: a One UN project" that could be implemented within the One UN framework by all the participants of the Inter-Agency Support Group. There was general agreement on the merit of such a project from the Group, which suggested that it could focus on capacity-building at the country level and adopt a bottom-up approach, taking into account the perspectives and concerns of country offices.

21. The session then discussed three issues, focusing on sharing information and experiences on how to convert guidelines into successful practice.

Capacity-building at the regional and country levels

22. Capacity-building is a central component of the action plan. In this regard, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, together with various agencies, developed a resource kit on indigenous peoples' issues and a Training module on indigenous peoples' issues to be used widely. The Permanent Forum, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) shared information on their

experiences and plans regarding training on indigenous peoples' rights and issues, agreeing that all stakeholders have to be involved in such training.

Consultation and participation mechanisms

23. A number of organizations provided examples of consultative processes for engaging with indigenous communities at the regional and country levels, notably UNICEF on its consultative group of indigenous leaders and UNDP on planned consultations with indigenous communities in Latin American countries. WIPO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided examples of successful institutionalized participation mechanisms put in place by their organizations.

24. The discussion evolved around the difference between consultation and participation, including the advantages and disadvantages of formalized mechanisms as opposed to more flexible dialogue with indigenous communities, the question of who are the appropriate and/or legitimate representatives of indigenous communities and who should be engaged in consultation or participation processes, as well as financial implications.

25. The Inter-Agency Support Group emphasized the great importance of such processes, since they might indeed lead to critical adjustments to projects or activities. They would have to be context specific.

Communication and advocacy

26. The Inter-Agency Support Group noted the importance of improved communication between the various agencies of the Group on indigenous peoples' issues, but also with Governments, notably within the framework of joint United Nations/United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes. All agencies confirmed the importance of country ownership and Government involvement at all stages of United Nations policy and programming regarding indigenous peoples, as well as with the indigenous communities concerned by a development programme.

Recommendations for follow-up on joint United Nations action at the regional and country levels

27. The Inter-Agency Support Group reiterated its commitment to further implement the plan of action for the roll-out and implementation of the United Nations Development Group guidelines on indigenous peoples' issues. In the light of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on the guidelines in paragraphs 61 and 103 of the Forum's report on its seventh session (E/2008/43), the Group will consider pursuing relevant editing of the guidelines through the appropriate procedures.

28. The Group shall reinforce capacity development efforts for all partners at the country level (indigenous peoples, Governments, donors and others), on the basis of a bottom-up, country-driven approach.

29. The members of the Group shall proactively pursue mechanisms for inviting country-level interest in such joint projects. The Group suggested that those joint projects might focus not only on countries but also on specific communities.

30. The Group requested that the secretariat of the Permanent Forum share existing information on consultations with and participation of indigenous peoples.

31. OHCHR shall share with the Group a revised consolidated project proposal entitled "Working together on indigenous peoples' rights: a One UN project".

32. The Group, notably the secretariat of the Forum, shall take steps to ensure better communication between the various members of the Group, notably by the possible creation of an online workspace for sharing experiences and strategies.

33. The Group shall explore the possible establishment of inter-agency mechanisms similar to the Group at the regional level, starting with Latin America, in order to ensure further coordination and communication between the various players.

34. United Nations agencies shall look for opportunities to raise awareness and strengthen their presence and involvement with regard to indigenous peoples' issues in the Pacific region.

Theme 3
Contribution of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues to the work of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

35. The Group discussed the status of the implementation of the recommendations addressed to it by the Permanent Forum over the past years, the new method of work of the Forum, and the items on the agenda of the eighth session of the Forum, as well a number of other pending issues.

Status of the implementation of recommendations addressed to the Inter-Agency Support Group by the Permanent Forum

36. Most recommendations addressed to the Inter-Agency Support Group between the second and the sixth sessions of the Permanent Forum have been implemented or are under implementation. Specific information was provided on four that were slow in starting: the promotion of the cross-cutting issue of children and youth; the participation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in the Group; a Group workshop on policies and best practices for engaging indigenous youth and children in the prevention of suicide among them; and a technical review of international standards on the protection of traditional knowledge. The agencies concerned shared information and future plans for implementation.

New method of work for the eighth session of the Permanent Forum

37. The new method of work for the eighth session of the Forum, notably the procedure of examining in depth the work of six United Nations agencies was discussed; UNDP, IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), OHCHR, UNICEF, as well as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs volunteered to take part. The possibility of providing short statements would continue to be offered for all participating agencies. The modalities to best facilitate the new procedure still had to be determined, and a

number of observations and suggestions were made for the consideration of the secretariat of the Permanent Forum.

Themes for the eighth session of the Permanent Forum (2009)

38. The Inter-Agency Support Group provided feedback on the four themes of the upcoming 2009 session of the Permanent Forum.

Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People: observations and recommendations for follow-up

39. Regarding the mid-decade review, Member States asked the secretariat of the Permanent Forum to develop a flexible assessment modality that would take into account the new momentum and challenges created by the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Group made a number of observations and suggestions for consideration by the secretariat:

(a) Continue the annual reporting mechanism as part of the midterm review process;

(b) Use the adoption of the Declaration as an opportunity for broad mobilization to rejuvenate the Decade;

(c) Take stock of institutional changes and achievements in United Nations agencies and funds on the basis of the in-depth analysis of the six United Nations agencies, as well as the short contributions to be received from other agencies;

(d) Transfer institutional advancement to the ground level and provide, for example, a snapshot of a couple of countries comparing the situation of indigenous peoples and policies at the beginning of the First Decade and in the middle of the Second Decade.

Economic and social development of indigenous peoples: recommendation for follow-up

40. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum will elaborate an analytical document using inputs from various agencies. The Inter-Agency Support Group suggested that such an analysis should take into account linkages between development, culture and identity, and be disseminated widely in order to engage in dialogue with indigenous peoples.

Indigenous women and gender issues: observations and recommendations for follow-up

41. UNIFEM introduced the theme by recalling key recommendations on indigenous women formulated by the Permanent Forum at its third session, held in 2004.

42. The Inter-Agency Support Group members suggested that the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be contacted about the situation of indigenous women and girls.

43. The Group also agreed on the following:

(a) Agencies should develop programmes specifically targeted to indigenous women but should also seek to mainstream gender in all programmes;

(b) Indigenous women should be further integrated into United Nations internal processes, and the recruitment of indigenous women within United Nations agencies should be encouraged;

(c) The secretariat of the Permanent Forum could facilitate exchange of information on the policies and programmes of the various members of the Group on the issues of indigenous women;

(d) The Permanent Forum at its eighth session could consider addressing emerging issues, such as the impact of climate change on women; the relationships between gender, rights and intercultural dialogue; and gender diversity in indigenous communities.

Indigenous peoples in the Arctic and climate change: observations and recommendations for follow-up

44. Presentations by UNEP, UNESCO and the Permanent Forum and subsequent discussions led to the following suggestions and recommendations:

(a) Give further consideration to the impact of climate change on indigenous peoples and on the exploitation of resources in the Arctic;

(b) Ensure coherence between the climate change agenda (in particular in the perspective of the post-Kyoto negotiations) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(c) Further involve in the regional meetings promoted by the Permanent Forum organizations with a focus on climate change and not exclusively those specialized on indigenous issues;

(d) Take the opportunity presented by the report undertaken by OHCHR (following Human Rights Council resolution 7/23) on climate change and human rights to push important issues related to indigenous peoples onto the agenda of member States;

(e) Relevant agencies should actively participate in the half-day event on the Arctic at the eighth session of the Permanent Forum;

(f) Carry out studies on the coherence between climate change policies and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Other issues

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: information and suggestions for follow-up

45. OHCHR briefed the members of the group on the outcomes of the workshop on implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in their policies and programmes. The following suggestions were made:

(a) Promote ratification of ILO Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries;

(b) Provide wider visibility for the Declaration by making it available in all languages including indigenous languages;

(c) Chart out a list of good practices in each field of the Declaration, reviewing related policies within the organizations concerned;

(d) Further integrate indigenous issues in the strategic planning of organizations;

(e) Design training programmes for indigenous peoples;

(f) Involve indigenous peoples in country programme development, notably through recruitment of indigenous professionals in the United Nations system.

46. OHCHR briefed the Group on recent human rights developments of relevance to indigenous peoples' issues, notably the launching of the new universal periodic review, a review of the human rights records of United Nations Member States once every four years. Inter-Agency Support Group members were encouraged to share relevant information with OHCHR as appropriate.

Indicators of indigenous peoples' well-being, poverty and sustainability

47. The Group had a short discussion in preparation for an international technical workshop on indicators of indigenous peoples' well-being, poverty and sustainability to be convened by Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) in collaboration with ILO, with funding from AECI (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional), building on the 2004 report on data collection and disaggregation for indigenous peoples and the 2008 summary report on the meetings about indigenous peoples and indicators of well-being (E/C.19/2008/9).

48. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity shared information on indicators used to assess the implementation of the Convention with regard to traditional knowledge, and UNESCO shared information on the indicators of the status and trends of linguistic diversity and numbers of speakers of indigenous languages. ILO shared information on its work on traditional occupations and knowledge, as well as on monitoring of the implementation of indigenous peoples' rights; while UNICEF drew attention to its sociolinguistic atlas. The Permanent Forum informed the Group about ongoing consultations with the United Nations Statistical Commission, the only body that could certify indicators, which showed that there was the need for a simple and feasible data collection method that could be shared widely.

Employment for indigenous peoples in the United Nations

49. ILO announced that it was elaborating a concept note for a technical paper on the employment of indigenous women and men in the United Nations, which it was going to circulate among Inter-Agency Support Group members for comments. On that issue, OHCHR underlined the positive role of the Indigenous Fellowship Programme in promoting the employment of former indigenous fellows within United Nations agencies where they received training and encouraged Group members to consider the applications of former fellows for employment and consultancy opportunities. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum mentioned the database of indigenous professionals it had created in 2008 which was at the disposal of Group members.

Note on the situation in Bolivia

50. During its annual meeting, the Inter-Agency Support Group expressed great concern regarding the recent wave of violence in Bolivia. Permanent Forum member Carlos Mamani Condori provided some background on the situation. The Group expressed its hope that the situation would be resolved peacefully and quickly through effective dialogue and that all necessary steps would be taken to protect the human rights and freedoms of the affected indigenous peoples and their communities.

III. Concluding remarks

51. The Inter-Agency Support Group meeting concluded with an impressive record of issues and items covered to advance collective United Nations support to the Permanent Forum. These ranged from the challenging debate on the concept of development with culture and identity and the related programmatic options for supporting the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to more pragmatic consideration of concrete action to implement the United Nations Development Group guidelines at the regional and country levels and respond to the demands of specific thematic initiatives.

52. The Group meeting at UNESCO succeeded, in particular, in laying the groundwork for reflection on the theme of the ninth session of the Forum "Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity" and the agreement to elaborate and present a joint reflection paper.

53. The Group expressed its sincere gratitude to UNESCO for hosting the 2008 annual meeting, and thanked in particular Katérina Stenou, who coordinates the contributions of UNESCO to the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and her colleagues Susanne Schnuttgen, Culture Sector, and Douglas Nakashima, Science Sector, as well as all other colleagues for their warm welcome and efficiency in organizing this encounter. Participants reiterated their appreciation for the efforts made to involve the Director-General and senior staff members of UNESCO.

54. UNEP and UN-Habitat proposed that they host the 2009 annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group at Nairobi. The proposal was received with appreciation by all members of the Group.